



## Connecticut Food System Alliance

February 6, 2023

To: Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Children

RE: SB 929, **An Act Expanding School Meal Programs to Provide Free School Meals to All Students**

Senator Maher, Representative Linehan, and members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Meg Hourigan, resident of New Britain and Coordinator of Connecticut Food System Alliance. Connecticut Food System Alliance is a network committed to building an equitable, sustainable food system. We envision a vibrant local and regional food system where everyone has access to fresh, healthy food and farming is thriving and sustainable; this vision is achieved in part by building up local connections between farms and communities, in schools, grocery stores, and food businesses.

School meals should be free; “student lunch debt” should be remembered as a cruel historical fact instead of a perennial news story. Child hunger should not exist in the same communities where farmers struggle to sell produce; by building these connections, we can nourish children and support local agriculture.

Connecticut should implement universal school meals to address hunger and inequality that permeates our wealthy state. We should further incentivize and fund farm-to-school programs that provide opportunities for local farmers to sell produce and connect students with healthy food. Legislation like SB 929 can transform the food system by creating these connections.

Thank you for your consideration and public service. Connecticut Food System Alliance and our partners across the state are committed to making universal school meals a reality for Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Meg Hourigan

Coordinator, Connecticut Food System Alliance